

RESEARCH PROJECT ARTICLE

A Vicious Cycle of Gender Inequity
in Contemporary Japan

Eriko MIYAKE

Department of Childhood Studies
Faculty of Contemporary Social Studies

I. Introduction

How can we explain the differences in educational and employment outcomes of men and women in Japan? In what ways are these trends distinctive from the outcomes of men and women in America and other advanced industrial countries?

Recent advances in feminist theory have persuasively argued that looking at gender differences in isolation from other factors—namely, class and race-ethnicity—is inadequate to understand how discrimination occurs and what its consequences are. The central claim of Amott and Matthaai (1996) is that women's oppression is felt differently according to one's class and race-ethnicity, situated in particular historical circumstances. Oppression and exploitation are not felt independently as a woman. Rather oppression and exploitation are felt as the combination of these three variables.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the applicability of "race, class and gender as categories of analysis" (Collins 2001; Amott and Matthaai 1996) to analyzing gender in-

equity in education and employment in contemporary Japan.

This paper is divided into the three main sections that follow. In section II, I illustrate some of the main ideas of gender-race-class inclusive feminist theory. In this section I also briefly discuss basic theory regarding schooling as a domain for class reproduction. Given that advanced societies base their legitimacy on the central role of schooling as a means to meritocratic advancement, empirical studies on how schooling can reproduce existing class structures are particularly important to review.

In section III, I apply the gender-class-race inclusive approach to contemporary Japanese society. First, I review a few of the key changes in gender relations and socio-economic and employment policies. Second, I analyze the relationship between gender, social class and educational outcomes. Third, I analyze recent trends in the workplace by examining how a new underclass of women is emerging through part-time work with specific conditions unique to the Japanese labor market. Fourth, I draw a link between education and work in order to understand the impact of education on women's career paths. Finally, I briefly ana-

lyze how immigration and ethnic minorities in Japan are part of an overall analysis of racial discrimination in Japanese society.

In section IV, I conclude by highlighting the explanatory power of the race-class-gender approach to the study of Japanese women and society. The main goal of this paper is to reveal layers of exploitation that lead to social inequity and social injustice in Japan. I then finalize with recommendations for how Doshisha Women's College can improve women's education to fulfill the larger mission of the university in equalizing women's educational and work opportunities in a more democratic society.

This paper is the product of a three-year project (between 2000 and 2003) on "gender and education" sponsored by Doshisha Women's College in Japan. A prior research paper which is an off-spring of the project is referred to where it is relevant (Miyake 2003). This paper also serves as a starting point for a larger multi-year research program to explore and interpret the complex ways in which women are discriminated against in Japanese society as well as in other comparative settings.

II. Conceptual Framework : Simultaneous Analysis of Gender, Class, and Race-Ethnicity

Looking at the lives of diverse women, feminist thought has recently developed by identifying better explanations for the oppression that happen at multiple levels. Black feminists, for example, expressed their dissatisfaction with "white" feminism. One of the central claims of black feminists is that racism, sexism and classism are inseparable, even if they seem separable in theory. (bell hooks 1990; Tong Nain 1991)

Gender, race and class create interlocking systems of oppression through which individuals see the world differently. Therefore, concerns of white feminism are not identical to those raised by African Americans, Asian Americans or Hispanic Americans.

Collins advocates a "new category of analysis that is inclusive of race [-ethnicity], class, and gender as distinctive yet interlocking structures of oppression." (Collins 2001 : 24) She proposes to go beyond dichotomous thinking because every individual can be both oppressed and an oppressor at the same time. Dichotomous thinking forces us to deal with inclusive attributes of race, class, and gender of each individual as separate entities. In order to reconceptualize oppression, Collins identifies three dimensions of gender oppression—the institutional, the symbolic, and the individual dimensions. (Collins 2001 : 26-30)

To illustrate these dimensions, let me use an example of my workplace and myself. I teach at a four-year women's college in Japan. We have a man as President at the top joined by male administrative staff as helpmates, faculty members with a male-female ratio of seven to three, a small number of foreign professors under short-term contracts, a future generation of middle class women who come from relatively wealthy middle class families in the classroom, office staff supported by female part-time employees, and working class men and women as the support staff to feed and clean up after the rest of the people. Being in the middle of the organizational structure, I could be both oppressor to the people ranked below me or I could be oppressed by people above me. Whether we like it or not, people attach different mean-

ing to my status as an associate professor from that given to a cleaning woman. As an individual, "each of us carries around the cumulative effect of our lives within multiple structures of oppression." (Collins 2001 : 29) Every morning, when I greet these cleaning women, a question recurrently comes to my mind. "We look alike, but how did each of us get where we are? Is each of us here because of our merit, or because we had access to different opportunities, or because society treated us differently? What are the implications for our next generation in terms of social equity?"

With the attempt to understand multiple structures of oppression, Amott and Matthaei (1996) constructed a conceptual framework of gender, race-ethnicity, and class and applied it to examining the history of women and work in America. Their research on the exploitation and oppression of women offers a stark contrast with prior approaches. Previously, feminist research would often look at women as a single category of oppression, separate from their race-ethnicity and their class. Similarly, analysis solely based on racial-ethnic perspectives could deny the existence of class differences within that particular group. Likewise, class analysis presents limitations when it is kept separate from race-ethnicity and gender. New theory claims that separating gender as a category of analysis from race-ethnicity and class is misleading. Rather, new theory proposes simultaneous analysis of these three different variables, or groups of at least two of them, within a historical context to best illuminate how oppression and exploitation operates. By combining these intrinsically interconnected variables, Amott and Matthaei demonstrate

that this conceptual framework has more explanatory power in analyzing women's work. (Amott and Matthaei 1996 : 11-28)

The central claim of Amott and Matthaei (1996) is that women's oppression is felt differently according to one's race-ethnicity and class in particular historical circumstances. Moreover, even the concept of what it means to be a woman is socially constructed based on these three different variables in a historical time and place. For example, Korean-Japanese women working in the food markets of Osaka during the 1970s do not have same experience of oppression and exploitation as do wives of high status Japanese business men in Tokyo during the same period. Oppression and exploitation are not felt independently as a woman. Rather oppression and exploitation are felt as the combination of all three of these variables.

Amott and Matthaei (1996) first developed the distinctive history of racial-ethnic groups. In doing so, they treat race-ethnicity as constructed out of relationships among groups of people with different racial-ethnic, class, and gender backgrounds. Then, they examine both commonalities and differences among groups based on how capitalist development affected women's lives. Their data covers the period from 1900 to 1990 (historical accounts include colonial times). The racial-ethnic groups they studied included: American Indian, Chicana/o, European American (US born, Foreign born), African American, Chinese American, Japanese American, Filipina/o American, Island Puerto Rican, and U.S. Puerto Rican, both men and women, in at least eight industrial sectors, varying income levels, and four segments

of occupational status. Their study shed light not only on the contributions that diverse women made to economic history, but also to the differences among women that were constructed by the interplay between women's identities and social forces of economic development.

This paper is inspired by Amott and Matthaei's work (1996) and Patricia Hill Collins' "Towards a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection." (2001) Ever since I started studying gender issues, my attention has been drawn to "differences" among women rather than differences between men and women. My main concern has been focused on social injustice created by different family circumstances that people are born into. Now I realize that many feminist scholars share similar concerns and have developed a common language of analysis to shed new light on an old problem. This paper is an initial attempt to introduce the importance of simultaneous analysis of race, class, and gender as an interpretive focus for Japan.

The ways in which schooling relates to social class has been debated by many researchers. The underlying question is whether or not education functions as a social equalizer to help people move beyond the boundaries of their social class, or whether it reinforces existing class position. (Coleman et al. 1966; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Apple 1978) Researchers have repeatedly shown a strong correlation between educational achievement and social class that has held over time and across cultures. (Persell 1977, 1993; Hurn 1993; deMarris and Lecompte 1999) Among a growing number of researchers incorporating feminist per-

spectives, Weiler (1988) looks at the lives and work of feminist teachers and administrators. In it, she reveals how feminists struggle against race, class, and gender discrimination that is being reproduced in the public schools. Weiler's claim moves beyond reproduction theory and explores how feminist resistance takes place in schools.

Schooling also functions as a mediator between social class and occupational outcomes. Some argue that education serves as a predictor of occupational outcomes when credentials are required in job acquisition. (i.e. Collins 1979) Others argue that social class matters more than education in predicting future occupational status. (i.e. Bennett and LeCompte 1990) When we add a variable of "gender" to social class and educational attainment, gender-role ideology serves as a significant predictor of women's occupational aspirations. (Gaskell 1973; 1994) Nakanishi (1998) examines the way social class and education determine a women's life-path in Japan. She argues that women's occupational outcome is influenced by women's gender-role ideology, mothers' work experiences, and the educational mission of the school women attend.

III. An Analytical Review of Gender, Class, and Race-Ethnicity in Japan

III. A. Overview of Key Trends in Japan

During the last thirty years, many things have changed in Japan that have directly affected the life trajectories of women in education, marriage, work and child-raising. To mention a few, women attend college in large numbers (48.7% in 2000), women marry later than ever before (on average at age 26), women are having fewer children than ever before (birthrate at

1.29 in 2004), and women have entered into the workforce in ever greater numbers (48.5% in 2003). The Japanese economy and society has also been undergoing significant changes that affect women's lives in other ways. Specifically, structural changes to business have resorted in the rise of an ever more popular and organized system of part-time employment with specific characteristics that directly affect the work options of Japanese women. The once widely accepted and idealized Japanese education system has also entered into a period where there is growing criticism and some cracks in its previous meritocratic legitimacy.

As Japanese society has become more affluent, it has also become more diverse and more class conscious than it previously was. The gap between the top ten percent and the bottom ten percent of income groups has grown wider, particularly since 1985. (Yano and Shima 2000) Incoming immigrant workers into the Japanese labor market have been increasing in number. Continuing to exclude minority groups and immigrant workers in Japan from social research does not do justice in understanding Japanese society as a whole.

In both Japan and America, there has been widespread gender inequity. In America, where the population is racially-ethnically diverse and economic class differences are much greater than in Japan, there is a significant and growing body of research linking gender differences to social class and schooling. However, because Japanese society is relatively homogeneous ethnically-racially and class differences have been smaller than in other advanced industrialized countries, sufficient attention has not been paid to the way these inter-

acting factors affect gender discrimination.

III. B. Gender, Class, and Education in Japan

In 2000, 48.7 percent of Japanese women went into higher education (31.5 % to four-year colleges and 17.2 % to two-year colleges), which exceeds the 47.5 percent of male enrollment in higher education. (Naikakufu 2001: 91) The sheer numbers give an impression that the gender gap has narrowed in terms of access to higher education. However, the majority of women continue to choose academic fields that have been traditionally preferred by women.

In terms of female representation as teachers and administrators of schools, the ratio of women teachers decreases as we move from primary to secondary education, and from secondary to tertiary education. Also, among the small number of women administrators at educational institutions, the ratio of school principals and university presidents decrease as we move from primary education towards higher education. (These statistics are illustrated in Inoue and Ehara 1999, pages 128 to 154.) In such a gender biased school environment, feminist scholars studied how schooling reproduces gender biases in Japan (Kimura 2000; Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda 1995). Through gender-biased curriculum and textbooks, male dominated school culture, and a hidden curriculum, girls become marginalized by losing self-confidence and self-esteem. (For an extensive study of this based on class observations, see Sadker and Sadker 1994).

In this section, I would like to introduce two relevant studies, one that looked at social class and schooling and another one that looked at gender, class and schooling in

Japan. The purpose is to identify what we know and what we don't know about gender and class with regards to education. I have not yet been able to identify research that has dealt with gender, class, and ethnicity inclusively with regard to education in Japan.

Kariya (2002) conducted a longitudinal study examining the relationship between social class and schooling. His first finding is that the length of time high school students studied at home decreased by 25 minutes on average comparing sample groups between 1979 and 1997. The higher the students' socioeconomic family backgrounds were, the longer the students studied at home. In the longitudinal comparison, the higher the students' socioeconomic backgrounds were, the less was the decrease in the time spent studying at home, while the lower the students' socioeconomic backgrounds were, greater was the decrease in the time spent studying at home. Furthermore, when other variables were controlled, mothers' academic background was more significantly correlated with the length of time students studied at home among the 1997 sample group. (Kariya 2002: 143-158)

Secondly, students' motivation to study in the 1997 sample group decreased on average among students of all socioeconomic backgrounds compared to the 1979 sample group. With the 1997 sample group, mothers' academic background showed the most significant relationship with students' motivation to study. The decrease among the group whose mothers had higher academic degrees was smaller than the decrease among the group whose mothers had lower academic degrees. (Kariya 2002: 180-184)

Kariya also compared the self-esteem of

the two groups. The 1979 sample group showed a positive relationship between the level of self-esteem and the amount of study regardless of their family background. On the other hand, the 1997 sample group didn't show a similar relationship. In other words, higher levels of self-esteem were not associated with a greater amount of study. Further analysis of the data indicates that students from lower socioeconomic family background increased their self-esteem by stepping out of the school culture, by denying the academic success story, and by focusing on enjoyment at the time. (Kariya 2002: 189-209) In synthesizing these findings, Kariya argues that class differences in educational attainment grew wider in the past twenty years. He takes a critical point of view towards current educational policy by saying that the latent influence of class may be overlooked by policy-makers who suggest that all students can be motivated equally.

In his study, Kariya does not explain why mothers' educational background of the 1997 sample group showed significant correlations with children's length of time spent studying at home and children's motivation to study, nor does he explain why mothers' educational background was an insignificant variable with the 1979 sample group. In order to explain this, it will require further research. However, my hypothesis is that mothers' educational background became more diverse and more stratified towards the late 1990s. Mothers who had eleventh grade children in 1997 would have graduated from four year universities in the late 1970s. That was a time when women's enrollment rate in four-year universities began increasing rapidly. With the

1979 sample group, mothers with university degrees would have graduated from universities around 1960. At that time, women's enrollment rate in universities was about ten percent, which was far less than that in the late 1970s. This suggests that the 1997 sample group had more mothers with four-year university degrees, and also more mothers with two-year college degrees compared to the 1979 sample group. This indicates "educational mothers" are still likely to exist among women with university degrees.

Kariya's study provides some insight about social class and schooling in Japan. As Kariya and a group of university professors previously predicted, when the results of OECD administered international test scores were announced in December 2004, the decline of Japanese children's ranking caused serious concerns among educators in Japan. In addition to various causal factors debated over the decline of test scores, it also may have something to do with the current image that I have about Japanese mothers.

What images do I have about Japanese mothers? The number of full-time mothers who can afford to stay home and devote to their children is decreasing. More women are drawn into labor force, with the majority of them as part-time employees under unfavorable work conditions. Those mothers spend less time with their children and may be less concerned about their children's academic progress. Those mothers are less likely to believe in academic credentials after they have seen the scandalous corruption, arrests and failures of Japan's bureaucratic elites at the same time that Japanese corporations fell into bankruptcy in a prolonged crisis of the Japanese economy. Un-

less mothers themselves experienced economic and social success through education, these factors seem to give growing doubts to many other mothers as to whether they should give the same devotion to their children's educational careers as mothers may have once given. When mothers' beliefs about education are correlated with their children's academic achievement level, current trends suggest a declining commitment by children to academic achievement, thus affecting overall academic test scores.

Regarding how girls' social class affects their schooling, Ojima and Kondo (2000) examined the period between 1945 and 1974. During this thirty-year period, girls' enrollment in higher education increased across every social class, as categorized by father's occupational status. At the same time, the socioeconomic status and the college enrollment rate were positively correlated. In other words, the higher the family social class, the higher the probability that girls would go to universities. When the same sample group was analyzed by social class according to economic wealth, girls from the wealthiest group showed the most rapid growth in university enrollment rate, particularly during the first fifteen years of this period. It was also the time when the Japanese economy grew most rapidly. Ojima and Kondo argue that the growth of household income worked as a push factor sending more girls to colleges and universities. In addition, when there were more than three children in the family, the family wealth was divided unequally—more to the eldest and more to boys than girls during this period. It was a period when class differences among girls became distinctly wider with regard to access to higher educa-

tion. (Ojima and Kondo 2000 : 30-37)

It is also pointed out that rapid growth of women's enrollment rate in higher education between 1965 (11.4 percent total) and 1975 (32.9 percent total) had to do with the rapid growth of junior colleges in Japan. Particularly for women from middle to lower social class, two-year junior colleges were preferred to four-year universities. Women typically went into fields such as humanities, home economics, education and pharmacology. Thus around mid 1970s, different gender tracks were established between men and women; men went into four-year universities in fields such as social science, engineering, and natural science, and women went into two-year colleges in the fields mentioned above. (Ojima and Kondo 2000 : 37-39)

Ojima and Kondo analyzed longitudinal changes of academic career patterns among three age cohort groups incorporating gender and social class variables. Women only from the highest socioeconomic group showed a similar academic career pattern to those of men from the two highest socioeconomic groups, while the rest of the sample groups of both men and women showed lesser development in longitudinal change over forty years. It indicates that class differences among women grew wider than those among men over the period. (Ojima and Kondo 2000 : 39-42)

Both covering the postwar period to late 1990s, Ojima and Kondo analyzed the overall pattern of educational attainment based on social class and gender, and Kariya analyzed various aspect of education in relation to social class. What we learn from these studies is that gender differences in terms of the sheer rate of access to higher education

have grown smaller, but the class differences among women with regard to access to higher education have grown larger and more diverse than those among men. Furthermore, children's educational attainment is influenced by mothers' educational background in terms of how long they study at home and how much they are academically motivated. What we are seeing is a far more important role that mothers play in shaping and reproducing children's academic career. It suggests the importance of incorporating mother's educational background in evaluating the socioeconomic status of a family. However, how to incorporate women's socioeconomic status into that of a family's standing is a debated issue.

There are four different ways of identifying women's social class: 1) based on spouse's educational background, spouse's income, and spouse's occupational status; 2) based on women's educational background, women's income, woman's occupational status; 3) based on the average of each variable of educational background, income, and occupational status between a woman and her spouse; and 4) based on the higher value of each variable of educational background, income and occupational status between a woman and her spouse. To this date, a woman's social status is not reflected in identifying socioeconomic family background because its influence has been statistically insignificant. Akagawa (2000) indicates that when a woman's contribution to family income exceeds 45 percent of the total, a woman's social status begins to influence the socioeconomic status of the family. (Akagawa 2000 : 47-61) When we are seeing more women producing a significant portion of family income, a growing income gap

among women, more divorce, and more single women, more realistic ways of identifying both women's and family social class are needed.

III. C. Gender, Class, and Work in Japan

About half of Japanese women are in the labor force as of 2004, but Japan has the largest income gap between men and women (100: 65) and the lowest rate of women in managerial positions (8.2%) among industrialized countries. Furthermore, in a comparison among industrialized countries, Japanese women spend the longest number of hours both at work (3.49 hours/day) and on housework (4.41 hours/day). Men spend the least time on housework (0.31 hours/day) and longest hours at work (7.15 hours/day). (Inooue and Ehara 1999: 109, 115).

One of the major characteristics of the Japanese labor market is that there are a significantly larger number of part-time workers than in other developed countries. As of 1999, 37.4 percent (OECD average, 24.0 percent) of female workers were part-time employees while 11.5 percent (OECD average, 7.0 percent) of male workers were part-time employees. Out of all part-time workers, 67.9 percent were women and 21.8 percent were men. (Mitsuyama 2001: 170) Furthermore, the ratio of part-time employees has been increasing annually with the growth being concentrated in manufacturing, retail, and food service.

Mitsuyama (2001) identifies some characteristics of part-time workers that are unique to the Japanese labor market when compared to European countries. First, part-time workers in Japan are like a hidden, "quasi" full-time labor force in terms of

the number of hours worked and the levels of their responsibility. Fifty percent of all part-time workers and 35 percent of female part-time workers work more than 35 hours a week. On average, 4 percent of female part-time workers occupy low to middle level managerial positions. Second, the contracts of a majority of part-time workers are limited to one year and have been renewed 10 times on average. Under these conditions, they receive no annual raise in their hourly wage and remain over long periods of time with significantly lower wages across different work sectors. On the other hand, full-time employees normally receive an annual raise in their salary. Thus, the income gap between full-time workers and part-time workers continues to grow. Third, part-time workers have little access to retirement payments, pensions, health care and other fringe benefits. (Mitsuyama 2001: 180-187)

Mitsuyama argues that part-time workers in Japan constitute a distinct social class. (2001: 187) Significantly a large number of female workers are exploited by unfavorable work conditions of long hours, low pay, short contracts, and no fringe benefits. When business corporations are increasingly relying on underpaid part-time workers, where the majority of them are late thirty to middle-aged married women, this phenomena suggests the emergence of a new underclass in Japan. One of the reasons for the increase in part-time employment is the way information technology has been used since the 1990s in retail and food service. The new technology provides access to sales-related computerized information which enables businesses to reorganize their employees in more focused and cost-effective ways. However, the question re-

mains why women, largely middle-aged married women, are concentrated under consistently unfavorable work conditions?

Among developed countries, Japan is the only country that women's labor participation rate deviates from the normal curve. The "M-shape" curve of Japan has the lowest participation rate of the age group 30 to 34. It has been the social norm and traditional practice in Japanese corporations that when women get married or have children, they resign (or used to be forced to resign) from work for family reasons. For those women, the option of going back to the labor market after their children reach a certain age is extremely limited. Once women withdraw from the labor market, where companies normally hire recent graduates of universities or high schools with long-term prospects, the access to full-time career track positions are almost non-existent except in occupations that require professional credentials such as teaching and nutrition.

Another factor contributing to the formation of part-time working women with spouses has to do with the family wage policy that comes with social security, health care and tax breaks as a package. The family wage policy was made with the model of a man supporting his full-time housewife and two children. Under this model, a man exchanges his full commitment to a corporation with permanent employment and the seniority-based wages including full health insurance coverage for himself and his dependent family members, a retirement fund, and a pension for himself and his spouse. Under this safety net umbrella, as long as a spouse's annual earning do not exceed 1.3 million yen (about \$12,000), she is able to

receive all her husband's benefits as a dependent spouse. Therefore, married women prefer to use this system when they need to increase the family income by going into the part-time workforce up to the 1.3 million yen income limit so they can still receive benefits through their husbands.

The third factor that increases the part-time labor force has to do with the changes in the employment policy posed by the Japan Business Federation in 1995. Their proposal was to divide the labor force into three categories: 1) long-term full-time workforce; 2) highly skilled professional workforce; and 3) flexible temporary workforce. The thrust of this policy was to limit the number of employees of the first category with the conventional practice of lifetime employment and seniority-based wages, and to have a greater and flexible access to the second and the third categories to reduce labor costs. (Yokoyama, 2002: 302-306) This employment scheme is already reflected in the labor market with the increased number of female part-time workers. In other words, this employment system is feminizing the flexible temporary workforce with an increasing income disparity from the long-term full-time workforce.

In the aforementioned labor market, a small number of women enter the long-term full-time labor force, even a smaller number of women get employed as highly skilled specialized professionals at any point of their career, and a large number of women go into the unstable temporary workforce as part-time workers. As their careers continue, the income gap among these women will grow wider, thus making the social stratification among women more distinct. This raises the question about what kind of

women are likely to be drawn into an unstable and temporary workforce.

I conducted a survey as part of the "Gender and Education" project of Doshisha Women's College in April 2002. I sent out questionnaires to 500 alumni from which we received 182 responses. The survey form included 62 questions covering college experiences, job experiences, gender-role beliefs, perceived philosophy of DWC, and various kinds of personal data. (To consult the original report, see Miyake 2003. The following analysis about part-time employees is not included in the aforementioned paper).

Among the sample group of 182 women, 85.2 percent of them (155 women) have had some work experience. Out of this group, 28.4 percent (44 women) have remained in the workforce, while 71.6 percent (111 women) quit their jobs largely due to family reasons after marrying or having children. Out of women who quit their jobs (111 women), 57.7 percent (64 women) went back to the workplace after some time. When we take a close look at these 64 women who returned to the workplace, as many as 62.5 percent (40 women) went back to work either as part-time employees or as what we call "arubaito" (temporary short-term employees) while 18.8 percent (12 women) returned to the workplace as full-time employees.

The following analysis is based on about 40 women who returned to the workplace as part-time employees (including "arubaito") versus 12 women who returned to the workplace as full-time employees. First, part-timers ages ranged from 23 to 63, but most were in their mid 40s (80% were married). Full-time employees were most-

ly in their 20s and a few were in their 30s (73% were single). As commonly noted, part-time employees in Japan are typically middle-aged married women. On the other hand, those who get full-time positions are relatively young. It is said that career options for Japanese women over 40 years old are extremely limited unless they have highly specialized professional skills. This data suggests the extreme difficulty that re-entering, middle-age women have finding full-time positions.

The sectors that full-time employees typically go into are civil service (in public offices) and teaching/education. For part-timers, the most common sectors were retail, sales and teaching. Very few women got into the more exploitative manufacturing sector. Also, the fact that many women went back to teaching has to do with the emphasis on teacher training programs at Doshisha Women's College. Spouses of full-time employees had higher educational backgrounds than spouses of part-timers.

This sample group of Doshisha Women's College represents the national trend that even with four-year university degrees, a majority of women return to the workplace as part-time employees once they quit their first job, and re-entry options for married women as full-time employees are highly limited. The re-entry patterns found in this study are consistent with overall trends for gender tracking in terms of the work sectors chosen and the priority women tend to give to family over work.

When we divide the sample group into four groups based on their work experience, the survey portrays distinctive images among these groups. These four groups are 1) women with interrupted work experi-

ence (had a job, quit, went back to work, 64 women), 2) women with continuous work experience since graduation (44 women), 3) women with some work experience but never returned to the workplace after resigning (47 women), and 4) women with no work experience since graduation (26 women).

The following images are based on questions regarding the reasons for staying in or out of, or leaving or returning to the job market, marital status, number of children, housing arrangement, the life challenges they face, and the support from their parents and parents-in law. A notable characteristic of the first group (women who returned to the workplace after interruption) is that the women in this group showed the highest divorce rate and received more financial support for either their own or their children's education from their parents. Their need for financial independence after divorce seems to have raised the re-entry rate to the job market. The women in the second group (who have continuous work experience since graduation) show that they are paying some price by sacrificing their health or family time in order to get financial and psychological rewards from work. Though the percentage is small, this group is more likely to encounter problems such as sexual harassment and extra-marital relationships. A majority of them said they have no children. The third group (those who never returned to the workplace after some work experience) illustrates the difficulty of combining work and family. Women in this group have more children (17 percent of them have three children) than the women in other groups and face more problems related to child-raising. Women in

the fourth group (who never did paid work since graduation) have two children on average. They had the highest rate of multi-generational household and parental support in childcare, educational expenses, property acquisition as well as food and other supplies. They also had the lowest rate of facing financial problems or life challenges. (Miyake 2003 : 33-34)

These images of women portrayed by the survey reflect both traditional and newly emerging images of Japanese women in the following ways. The traditional option favored by middle class women was to stay married to a man who can bring a family income while she stays away from the workplace to raise children. Actually, women of the sample group mentioned earlier largely represent what might be considered happily married women. The recent decline in the marriage rate and the birthrate indicates that this option has been less favored by Japanese women. On the other hand, women who go into the labor market commonly face problems in managing both work and family, and many women who give up their work after having a family fall into the trap of the exploitative conditions of part-time employees when they re-enter the labor market.

Women around the world have been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by what Amott and Matthaie call the "cult of domesticity." At the same time, this cult does not affect women equally. Women of different races and social classes are affected differently. Women in some cultures are affected more than women in other cultures. "[E]ven though child-rearing is women's work in most societies, many women do not have children, and others do not perform

their own child-care or domestic work.” (Amott and Matthaai 1996: 14) This approach provides a good illustration as a way to introduce the analysis of oppression and exploitation in Japan. Women’s lives in Japan have been inextricably linked to their central role in the family, especially as wives and as mothers. Women’s roles in the workplace have often been considered secondary to their role in the family. Women have often resigned from employment when they have children, returning to the workplace in a limited way.

In theory, the relationship between social class and occupational outcomes are always mediated by the educational outcomes. However, in Japan where the cult of domesticity has been a dominant practice, education does not necessarily function as a mediator between social class and occupational outcomes for majority of women. This theory seems to apply only to a small group of elite class women who belong to the first category of workforce described earlier — long-term, full-time, and career-track labor force. In the next section, I will discuss the linkage between women’s education and workplace in Japan.

III. D. Gender, Education, and Work in Japan

Academic tracking indicates students’ academic career patterns based on students’ academic performance such as test scores and GPA (Grade Point Average). Nakanishi (1998) argues that academic performance alone does not sufficiently explain women’s diverse academic careers and their subsequent life-paths. With an attempt to further understand what determines women’s life-paths, Nakanishi conducted a survey with three girls’ high schools and six women’s

colleges and universities in Tokyo. All these schools have a similar high level of academic achievement. In that respect, the academic performance levels of the sample groups are held more or less constant. (In Japan, schools and universities are stratified according to students’ academic achievement levels. Therefore differences in academic performance among students within schools are relatively small.)

First, she draws attention to the importance of the processes of how women internalize gender-role ideologies through socialization processes at school, social class-based culture, social norms, and customs and practices in the labor market. She argues that internalized gender-role ideologies held by women (traditional vs. non-traditional) feed into what she calls the “gender tracking” mechanism (family-oriented vs. career-oriented) to a greater extent than their academic performance in particular subject matters. Second, Nakanishi observes gender tracking mechanisms among different schools of similar academic performance level. She argues that women’s subsequent life-paths correspond to the kinds of educational philosophies and goals held by schools.

For example, the first high school, which focuses on women’s independence and professional education (particularly in science), produces students whose pursuits reflect that school mission. The second high school upholds the school mission of educating “lady-like Japanese women” and produces students who are likely to become full-time housewives or to go into gender segregated job sectors that are traditionally preferred by women. The school mission of the third high school is a hybrid between the

first and the second. The students from this high school show both traits of the first and the second groups. (Nakanishi 1998: 93-110) A similar correlation was observed among college graduates. The majority of students from the universities that are devoted to educating professional women aspire to go into professional and career-track occupational positions and to successfully manage both family and work. The universities of the second category with a mission of producing women of the prototypical image of "good wife, wise mother" are likely to produce women who would go into clerical work and eventually become full-time housewives. The hybrid type universities are likely to produce women with the mixed traits of the first two categories. (Nakanishi 1998: 111-147)

Nakanishi's research (1998) helps to answer the question why education does not function as a mediator between social class and occupational outcomes for majority of Japanese women. Her central claim is that neither academic performance nor university degrees predict Japanese women's life-paths. Rather, the gender-role ideology held by women, and the educational philosophy of the school women attend shape the gender tracking process. Further analysis reveals that women's life-paths correlate with school mission to a great extent and also with mothers' work arrangements (full-time/part-time/no occupation) to a lesser extent. In these correlations, the effects of schooling are greater among university students than among high school students. (Nakanishi 1998: 161-194)

Nakanishi's study reminds educators of the importance of not only reexamining educational philosophy and the goals of our

schools, but also constructing our own language of how we educate women in Japan. For example, Doshisha Women's College, where I work, can be categorized as a hybrid type in Nakanishi's sample groups. However, the creation during the past five years of a sociology department, computer media program, education program, and pharmacology department indicate a greater commitment to women's professional education. It calls upon us to reflect if our institution has only responded to recent market needs or if we have exhausted our discussion about our educational philosophy and its consequences.

III. E. Gender, Immigrant Workers and Minority Groups in Japan

Applying the conceptual framework of race, class, and gender inclusive analysis to Japanese society presents a big challenge, especially because immigrant workers and Japan-born racial-ethnic minority groups constitute only a small percentage of the population. For example, the problem of integrating the immigrant community into Japanese society, or the problems of adjusting the rules of daycare centers to incorporate different cultural practices of immigrant mothers began to appear in the media only recently. Another example is that very little is documented about the lives of Korean-Japanese women (the largest minority group in Japan) and how they educate their children. There is a serious lack of information and data about the lives of minority groups in Japan.

Nonetheless, the reason I consider the race-class-gender approach illuminating to Japanese society is because this approach has a great potential to reveal how oppres-

sion as well as resistance occur at multiple levels of social structures. Among a few studies that looked at immigrant workers in Japan is Douglass's work (2000) on international migration of women to Japan.

Douglass says, "In the future, ... a number of trends in Japan suggest that the immigration of women could both increase and diversify but much will depend on the level of critical awareness and social mobilization to confront issues of gender, class and race in Japan." (Douglass 2003: 92) As of 2004, there are 900,000 immigrant workers in Japan, which is 0.7 percent of total population and 1.8 percent of workforce. This does not include 220,000 unauthorized immigrants, 636,000 Japan-born Koreans (weber.ucsd.edu) nor other minority groups in Japan (i.e. Japan-born Chinese; Burakumin, Ainu, etc.).

Douglass identifies the female migration pattern to Japan as different from other high-income societies; that is a majority of women have been recruited for a single purpose: sexual services. As of 1990, 55.5 percent of apprehended illegal female migrants to Japan were workers in the sex industry, which still continues to be the strikingly dominant sector for women migrating to Japan. (Douglass 200: 114) Prostitution was once performed by young girls from the poorest peasant families in Japan. According to Douglass, the exploitative nature of immigrant prostitutes in Japan is interwoven with patriarchy, class, and racism in Japanese society. He predicts further growth and diversification of female migration to Japan under conditions arising from future demands in industry, demographic changes, inter-cultural marriages, and global development trends. (Douglass 2000: 98-

103)

Assuming that immigrant women (from Asian countries) in sexual services constitute the bottom layer of the pyramid of a stratified labor market, the next layer above seems to be filled by Nikkei immigrant women from Latin America who work mainly in the manufacturing sector, maybe together with some part-time employees of Japanese women in the equivalent sector. Douglas (2000) refers to the part-time employees of middle-aged and elderly Japanese women, saying that their exploitative work conditions parallel those of Nikkei immigrant women.

Analyses about immigrant women in Japan (Douglass 2000; Yamanaka 2000; Murphy-Shigematsu 2000) reveal not only the exploitative nature of immigrant workers but also the nature of the Japanese labor market, which is stratified with a patriarchal arrangement based on gender, class, and racial discrimination. Precisely because class and racial issues are hidden under the myth of Japanese society being "homogeneous" and "middle class," the race-class-gender inclusive approach has a great potential to reveal how social inequity and injustice operates in Japan.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations for Doshisha Women's College

IV. A. Conclusions

Advanced capitalist society needs a highly differentiated social structure to assign hierarchical roles within firms and the labor market. In a capitalist society like the United States where diverse racial-ethnic groups constitute a large percent of the population, and socio-economic class is spread widely, discrimination gets dispersed

among different racial-ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes. On the other hand, in a capitalist society like Japan where the population is ethnically relatively homogeneous and income is much more evenly distributed (in comparison to the United States), women as a gender become the target group for exploitation to assign discriminatory roles.

Whether or not women enter the labor market and what type of entry-reentry work pattern they choose are determined, to a large extent, by the socialization process of the schools they attend, their mothers' social class, and their gender-role ideology. Moreover, educational opportunities are increasingly correlated with a women's social class. In these ways, gender tracking constitutes a reproduction system shaping women's life-paths and further stratifying women into higher and lower class positions. This creates a vicious cycle of gender and class inequity in education and the labor market.

When we add race-ethnicity into the analysis, we observe overt discrimination against immigrant women and ethnic minority groups in Japan. The race-ethnicity factor is also inter-woven with class and gender in subtle ways. The relatively small percentage of racial and ethnic minorities in Japan camouflages the discrimination and exploitation that actually occurs. Ironically, applying the race-class-gender analysis to relatively "homogeneous" and "middle-class" Japanese society reveals that social injustice affects everyone and is caused jointly by sexism, classism, and racism that we don't normally see. Therefore I argue that this analytical approach is highly applicable to Japanese society and offers a rich perspective for social analysis.

IV. B. Recommendations for Doshisha Women's College

Excellence in women's education is mission-driven and depends on continuous improvement. Since this paper was also motivated by my perennial quest to improve women's education, I would like to present some recommendations to Doshisha Women's College (DWC) that I identified through this research project.

1. The educational mission DWC holds and communicates to all the members of its community (faculty, students, staff, graduates, etc.) plays a critical role in shaping students' subsequent life paths. It would be desirable for the faculty and staff members to engage in periodic dialogue about the educational mission of DWC and update its vision to address ever-changing realities of women's lives. Moreover, how this educational mission is communicated and acted upon deserves careful assessment.
2. The gender-role ideology that women acquire during their formative years is one of the determining factors of their career choices. DWC should expand students' exposure to women's studies courses and topics to raise students' awareness of the many different ways in which gender-roles are inculcated and socially reinforced, as well as the ways in which women exercise their freedom of choice. By raising students' awareness, they could be further empowered to make conscious choices about their gender related beliefs and actions.

3. Students often suffer from a lack of information in preparing for their career paths. Also as the economy undergoes significant change, students would benefit greatly from increased career guidance at an early stage, including seminars, talks and counseling about the job market and hiring practices. Increasing the availability of work internships can also have a large impact on the career paths women take.
4. The Tidball et.al. study (1999) on successful women's colleges indicate that many students will respond to increased expectations in their academic performance or career ambitions. There are many different kinds of messages DWC and its faculty can communicate to students about its high standards and expectations. For example, high achieving students and graduates could be recognized and presented as desirable role models for current students. Talks by high profile DWC graduates and other women could explore the many ways in which women can navigate the competing demands of work and family life over their career span.
5. Studies on the relationship between social class and schooling indicate that there is growing inequity, especially affecting students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. It would be desirable for the College to seek ways to provide low-interest, long-term student loans to needy students. Students would start paying off the loan after they graduate and when they start producing income.
6. Diversifying the University's student body with more non-Japanese would also promote more diverse learning experiences for all students while fulfilling a social justice goal of promoting equal opportunity. This could be achieved by finding ways to provide large partial or full scholarships to worthy students who are non-Japanese nationals.

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